MOBILITY

TOUCH TECHNIQUE

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REFSNÆSSKOLEN

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HV1708
B555

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Translated into English

by

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This booklet is intended as a guide for parents, home advisors, consultants, kindergarten teachers and school teachers in short, those who have contact with a blind or a partially sighted child.

It is not suggested that mobility training be given by all the abovementioned folk, but that the child, who has received mobility training and must maintain technique standards, will be well supported by the adults who, with the help of this photographic material will be capable of correcting bad habits.

Mobility training pupils are instructed in the correct techniques, but all mobility training is individual and the technique which is suitable for one child is possibly not suitable for another, and therefore solutions to special problems must be found. It will be to the child's advantage, when he is adult and more independence becomes a necessity, if he has been able to keep his training up to standard during his childhood.

Gitte Bjerre
occupational therapist

THE CANE.

The cane handle should reach my breast bone.

Or shall we say that the cane should reach to under my outstretched arm.

The cane handle should reach the breast bone. In the case of small children, better a little too long than too short.

Children grow quickly, but the cane does not. Therefore it is important, that the adults control the cane length, to be sure it is not too short.

When trousers need lengthening, perhaps it is time for a new cane.

I relax and hold the cane with my hand on the rubber grip, while my arm hangs naturally by my body. The cane is diagonally in front of me, so that it is a little longer out to the left than my left foot.

When you see me from behind, you may see the crook of the cane. Notice, that the cane tip is on the ground.

See how well I hold the cane in front of me, as I go.

PARTIALLY SIGHTED CHILDREN.

Most partially sighted children manage familiar areas without a cane, but when they are in unknown areas a cane provides security.

Difficulties in moving safely and in orientation vary from child to child, but very often the greatest difficulty is in seeing objects, which are close to them, and which are below eye height. This applies especially to those with tunnel vision. Therefore, many partially sighted children like to use a cane, when they are moving in busy areas, and some of them prefer to use the cane with "cross body" or diagonal technique.

BLIND CHILDREN.

Blind children also use "cross body" technique especially in the beginner stages, but the touch technique gives more protection.

The rubber grip should be held so that the extended index finger points downwards and rests on the flat side, the cane then becomes an "extension of the index finger".

The arc of the touch technique should come from the wrist, which should be held in the centre of the body.

That technique, combined with training in orientation, the pupil will have learnt with the mobility instructor, but parents and teachers can observe whether or not he is maintaing his correct "style".

When my left foot is forward, the cane must be on the right.

When my right foot is forward, the cane must be on the left.
Here you can see my "extended index finger".

When you see me from behind, you can see the cane tip in front of my left foot.

And you should not be able to see the crook of the cane on the right or left side. - I must hold it in the centre.

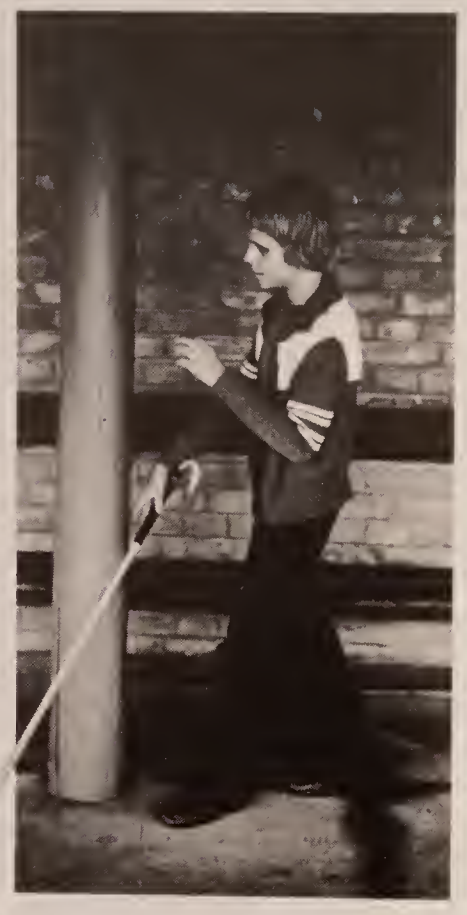
I lift the cane tip as little as possible over the ground.
I should "sweep" the surface with it.

ANXIOUS CHILDREN.

I am blind and also have a hearing loss, therefore I find it difficult to orientate myself and to find the way alone.

But I am able to learn a short route, if I concentrate and am patient.

A good thing, I had the cane here.



I don't feel very certain of myself and therefore cannot relax my left arm.

The touch technique is not used by all blind pupils. Children who are anxious and who prefer to have a guide, can often be motivated to go alone on familiar routes, if they use a cane held diagonally in front of them. This can often give them a feeling of security, the security necessary for moving alone.

This cross body technique can also be used as a forerunner to training in the touch technique, especially for 6, 7 or 8 year olds, who want to learn to walk a short route alone.

ALL BEGINNINGS ARE DIFFICULT.

I am a beginner

You must not swing the cane, just hold it diagonally in front of you.

Like this?

THE START.

Not all blind pupils begin early with cane training; but at Refsnæsskolen small pupils (6 to 8 years) who are interested and sufficiently developed are given the opportunity.

They receive 15 minute lessons in order to learn the body rhythm. When they are older and need to be able to manage longer routes, mobility training is continued and first then, they are allowed to take the cane home with them.

If a child who lives at home needs to learn to go to the kindergarten or perhaps to somewhere near the home, a cane used with diagonal technique can be very useful. It is difficult to begin training in touch technique at home, when the training periods must necessarily be short for small pupils. These children, can, when they are a little older, be given a full mobility training programme with a local mobility instructor.

Remember that the hand must be held in the centre and that the cane must not swing more than the width of your body.

No, that arc is much too big - you are not as wide as that.

Much better.

Now swing to the other side.

It isn't easy.

I think it's fun.

But I prefer to use both hands on the cane.

I can stop it, if I put my left hand behind my back.

Don't go too far away from me.

Out of the way.

I'm coming.

And here I come - - -

But I am taking it more easily.

STEPS.

It can be difficult to go up and down steps. The cane, which should be a help, can easily be a hindrance.

Here you see an effective method. The cane gives the pupil information on the steps and their construction.

It is not always easy for a pupil to understand a verbal explanation, but ask him to hold the left hand in front of the face as a protection, and with the right hand, to grip the cane in the outstretched hand. Then he has the correct grip.

I hold my hand in front of my face as a protection.

I must shorten the cane, therefore I place my hand under the grip.

Here, you can see clearly how my thumb pushes the cane forward.

Notice, that I hold the cane in my left hand, though I usually use my right.

That is because, as others do, I always keep to the right and I use the right hand on the railing.

The cane will tell me if there are still more steps in front of me.

And here it tells me, that there are no more steps - the railing tells me the same.

When I am coming down the steps, the cane should be long. I hold the grip,

and allow the cane tip to move lightly over the steps.

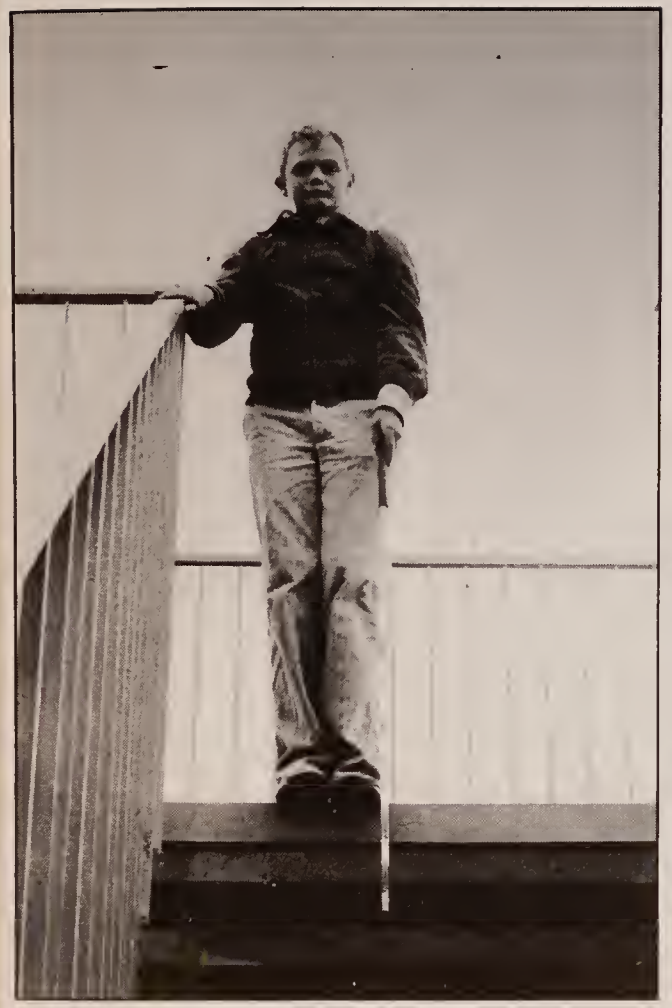
One step before I am down, the cane tip touches the ground and here, the railing has warned me two steps before.

When I have come down the steps, I change the cane over to the right hand.

I am on the way to the grocer.

I must go over the bridge.

There are many steps up.



A short view of the situation.

And then I go down.

See how much information a hand rail can give.

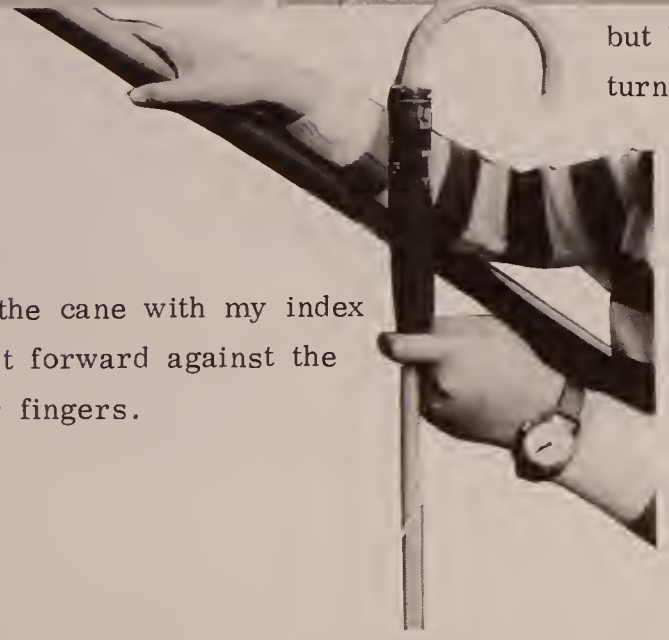
The technique is the same whether one is big or little.

I am a little afraid of steps.
The cane tells me, how many steps there are.
But I haven't learnt to use it properly yet.

I am partially sighted, but when I go to
town, I always take my cane.
Steps are especially difficult for me to see.

I also go up
and down steps,

but I don't like
turning my wrist.



I prefer to hold the cane with my index finger and push it forward against the back of the other fingers.

I take only one step at a time,
but that doesn't matter.

I don't like turning my hand either,

so I hold the cane with the whole hand.

There is no difference when going down.

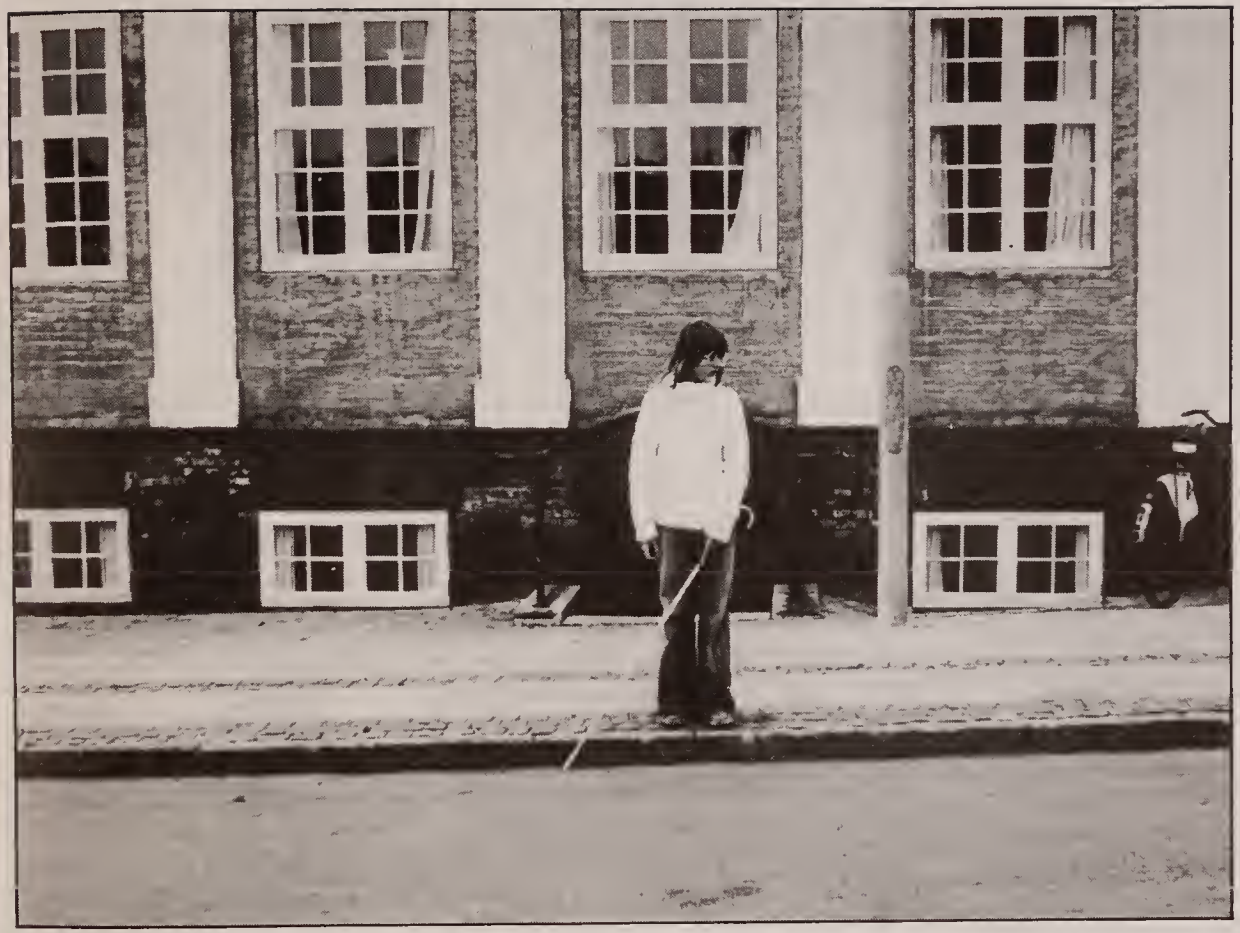
TOWN TRAFFIC.

I am partially sighted,

but I don't see all the obstacles on an ordinary footpath.

If there are many people in town I shorten the cane by holding it under the grip

Notice, that I use my best hand, the left.



Before crossing the road I place the cane tip in front of the kerb, so that the motorists can see, I want to cross,

I cross quickly.

I am partially sighted, and manage on the footpath without a cane,

but, when I cross the road, I open my short cane as a signal to the motorists, that I am rather uncertain of myself.

I show my cane, look both ways,

and then cross.

OBSTACLES.

The blind or partially sighted child often meets unexpected situations. Each time the problem must be solved individually.

When there are parked cars, and I want to cross the road, I go out, where the motorists can see me.
I touch the car with my back, and take care not to have the cane too far in front of me.

There is a pole in the middle of the footpath, but the cane takes it.

On my way to school, there is a footpath with such silly holes in it. Instead of using the footpath I can go out on the road and hold contact with the kerb, but I don't like that.

I can't use the touch technique, when I walk on this footpath, because the cane sticks in the holes, but I can hold the cane diagonally in front of me with my right hand, and have contact with the kerb at the same time.

When I go the other way, I use the left hand.

WHEN THE CANE IS NOT IN USE.

When I get into the car,

I place the cane down by the side of the seat.

The cane can easily be in the way, when one is not using it, so it must be placed out of the way.

I must make sure, that it doesn't get caught in the door.

Here you can see, where I put it and even if I sit on the back seat, it can still be placed there.

When I get out of the car,

I take hold of the cane.

and check with the cane if it is O.K. to get out.

Then I am ready to go again.

When I must use both hands, for example when I want to put on my gloves. I can hang the cane on my coat.

Inside I can place the cane under my chair

or I can leave it in the corner.

I prefer to put the cane in the cupboard.

but I must remember on which hook I have hung it,
otherwise I risk having to search for it.

I have a folding cane,

I fold it, when I go indoors.

Now it is quite small - if I had my school bag, it would fit in there.

When I go up to a door

I can find the door knob with the cane.

I avoid fumbling.

IN AND OUT OF DOORS.

When I go out of a door, I hold the cane well in front of me, so that I can find the steps if any.

WEATHER CONDITIONS.

There are many daily situations, which present difficulties for the blind and partially sighted child. Here the Danish climate plays it's part.

The child knows, that bad weather makes orientation difficult, and many need help from the adults in determining, whether or not it will be a hindrance on a particular day.

I am nearly being knocked over by this wind. It is fun, but only because I am not alone.

I want to cross. The sea behind me is making a lot of noise, and the wind is howling in my ears. I haven't a chance of hearing a car or a moped, so I just can't cross the road alone.

If a child is used to going alone to school, there must always be a possibility of being helped on days, where there is high wind, rain, snow or other bad conditions.

It is raining, and I can't hear my usual landmarks.

I only discover the big puddle, when I am in the middle of it.

I can't find the paving stones for all the leaves - and where are the steps?

The snow has covered my landmark on the ground and muffles the sounds I usually listen for.

LANDMARKS.

When I am ready to cross, I know that I must stand on the gravel and listen for cars. Only when I cross I must go on the asphalt.

While I listen for the traffic, I stand on the cobbles.

If I have crossed straight over the road, I will land on the cobbles.

A route is dealt up in landmarks. Some children need many, while others can manage with relatively few.

When a child is learning a route he must have help from an adult, to give him an explanation of the area and together with the child find, useful landmarks.

Landmarks can be many things - a kerb, an unevenness in the road, cobble stones, surface differences such as gravel, slabs, stones etc.

Landmarks can also be sound and echoes, for example, the motor at the water works, the compressor at the supermarket, an echo from a wall near the footpath or an echo from the wall of a house, when it ceases at a corner etc.

I know that the slabs will take me through the wood.

I must try to find out, what the cane can tell me.

I found the edge with the cane so I know, how far I have come.

When I am on the road without a footpath, I am soon home.

I know where I am, when I come to the flower bed.

I must turn when the kerb ends.

I keep to the grass edge because there isn't any kerb on my footpath.

I must cross the road, where the cars can see me best, and that is here with the pole.

When I have found the pole, I can go to the kerb and listen for the cars.

All clear.

Now I am going.

I know that asphalt footpath, it has grass on one side and a kerb on the other - sometimes I check.

When I come to the low fence, I know I am at Hansen's house and half way home,

and here, with the low bushes, the road turns.

When I come up the steep hill, I am home,

and here it is downhill to the main road.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KERB.

Where there is an entrance in the middle of a footpath, and there is no kerb, it is easy for a blind person to drift out onto the road without knowing.

It is therefore wise to turn into the drive and go from kerb to kerb.

I go a little way into the drive and then I cross,

and back again to the footpath.

In order to cross the road in a straight line, one must first stand at right angles to the kerb. But rounded corners are an exception.

If one crosses at right angles to a rounded kerb, one comes into the middle of the cross road. In order to avoid this, one must follow the kerb until it is straight, take a direction from there, and go straight across.

I can't go over here.

I must find a place, where the kerb is straight.

I can go over here.

See how the kerb twists the foot right out of the clog.

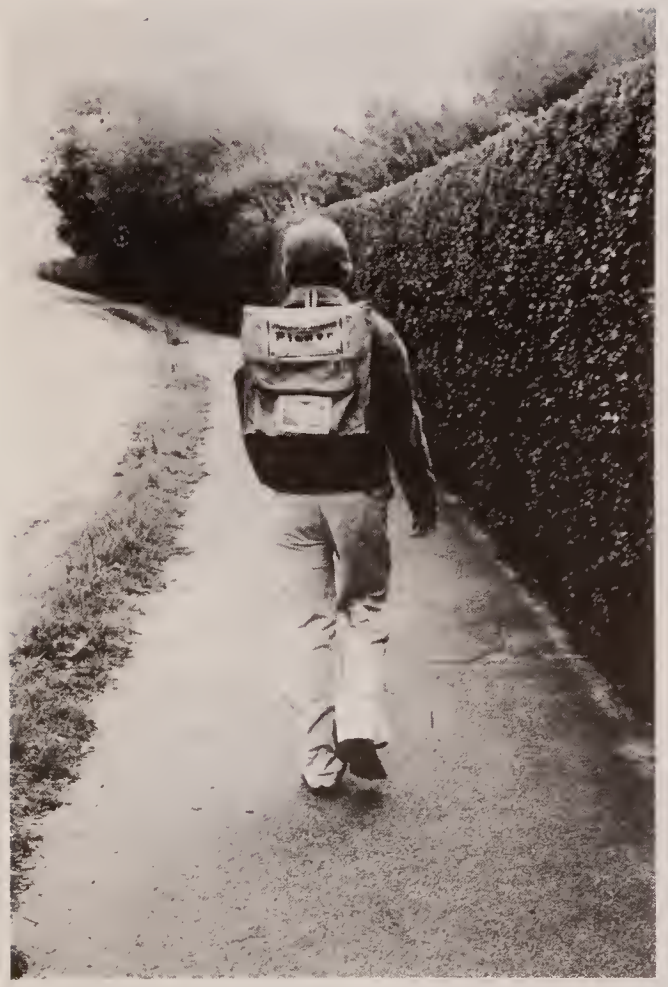
SHOES.

Clogs are not suitable for folk who cannot see, they make it difficult to feel surfaces and an ankle can be easily turned on uneven surfaces.
Shoes that can bend with the motion of the foot and hold it firmly are the most suitable.

It is difficult for me to feel the kerb.

I must feel once more to make sure I am treading on the cobbles.

THE SCHOOL BAG.



When I go to the grocer, I take my rucksack.

See what good carriage I have. It wouldn't be as good if I had a big bag in the other hand - I would not be able to keep that body balance.

I stand a half step behind my guide,
I lift the cane tip about 20 cm over the ground.

SIGHTED GUIDE TECHNIQUE WITH THE CANE

If a child is walking with a guide, she should lift the cane up under the arm, so that it does not get tangled in the guide's legs.

Here you can easily see that I am a half step behind my guide.

and that I use the sighted guide technique.

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